

HOCKEY HEARTBREAK IN MILAN

NEWS

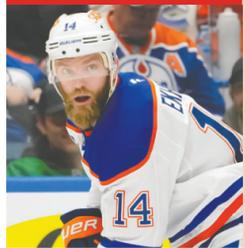
WILDFIRES

Preparations underway as season approaches A2

HEALTH

Half of 2023 kids' pain-medication shipment destroyed A3

SPORTS



TYCHKOWSKI

Time running out for Oilers to round into form NP9



DARRYL DYCK/THE CANADIAN PRESS

Team captain Marie-Philip Poulin struggles to contain her emotions after Canada's 2-1 overtime loss to the U.S. in the women's gold medal hockey game Thursday at the Winter Olympics. Canada led 1-0 after two periods before a late rally by the Americans. Find more Olympic coverage on pages NP4, NP9-11 and online at edmontonjournal.com.

Smith calls for vote on immigration

Referendum will give Albertans a say on provincial policy: premier

CINDY TRAN

Premier Danielle Smith says Albertans will head to the polls in October for a referendum that could reshape immigration in the province.

The focus of Smith's Thursday provincial address was on a set of referendum questions targeting immigration and, if supported by Albertans, could give the province

leverage to implement legislation that would restrict who would be able to receive social services. It would also require non-permanent residents to live in the province for 12 months before qualifying for provincially-funded programs.

"The changes we need to make to immigration are a significant departure from the status quo, and, therefore, I am seeking a referendum mandate from Albertans to

implement them," Smith said.

While acknowledging that falling oil prices have dented provincial revenues and will contribute to yet another challenging budget, Smith laid the blame at former prime minister Justin Trudeau's feet, calling his immigration policies "disastrous."

Smith said the surge in newcomers has put added strain on Alberta's health-care system, classrooms and social services, further compounded by weakening oil prices.

"In just the last five years of Trudeau's tenure, Alberta grew by almost 600,000 people to more

than five million, all while Ottawa throttled our most important job creating industries and prioritized immigration away from economic migrants and instead focused on international students, temporary workers and asylum seekers," Smith said.

She did not address the United Conservative Party's 2022 campaign "Alberta is Calling," which urged Canadians to migrate to the province with a promise of higher wages, affordability and opportunity.

SEE SMITH ON A4
■ DON BRAID, A4

NP



CANADA-U. S.

Canadians fear tariffs will get worse: poll NP2

Wedgewood Heights affordable-home plan goes ahead after heated debate

ERIC BOWLING

Despite vocal opposition, Edmonton's city council approved the sale of a surplus school ground in Wedgewood Heights for \$1 following a heated public hearing on Wednesday ordered by Justice Shaina Leonard in November.

Initially intended to be a part of a larger surplus school sale announced last November, the Court of King's Bench nixed the original deal after concluding the city had violated the Municipal Government Act.

Council decided to go forward with the sale of the land to Treaty 8 First Nations of Alberta after receiving new information from

community members and developers.

"It's tough, this isn't the only site where we've had this conversation over the years," said Mayor Andrew Knack.

"There's a number of sites where we've had to take away green space — it doesn't matter that it was supposed to be a school in the past, people are just used to having used that space — and yet those are some of the best locations where we've been able to build affordable housing.

"We know that tens of thousands of Edmontonians are in core housing need. Without building affordable housing in a substantial and significant way, we're not going to

be able to meet our goals, which is getting people out of that core housing need."

He added that council is trying to ensure a relatively even spread of affordable housing across the city to prevent an economic disparity between neighbourhoods. This would be Wedgewood Heights' first and likely only affordable housing project.

Treaty 8 Grand Chief Trevor Mercredi said the plan is to build 60 townhouse-style buildings. Of those, 47 units will be three-bedroom and the remaining 13 will be four-bedroom suites. The building will be in the northern section of the property.

SEE WEDGEWOOD ON A4

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AGRICULTURE

Canada needs a cohesive strategy to reach potential NP7

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